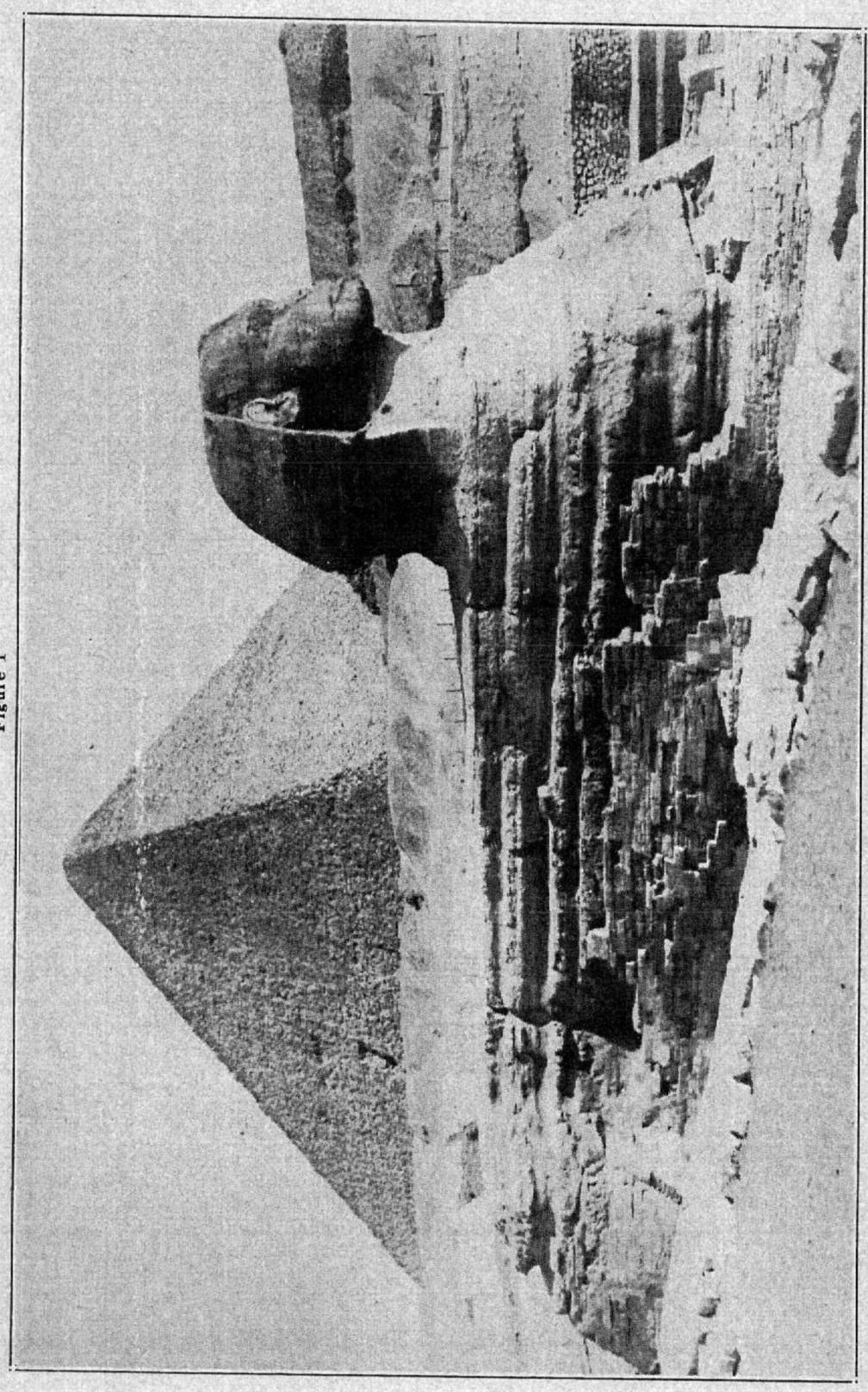


Figure 1 It all started in Egypt.

Spring-Summer 1968-1969

SIGMA TAU MONUMENTS

By M. H. Cook, Theta '21

At almost every Conclave within recent memory and on countless interim occasions the National Council has been asked to supply one or more of the Chapters with the design for a campus monument for Sigma Tau. In every case the answer has been the same. "We have no standard or typical Sigma Tau monument. It is our policy, in this as in most things, to encourage the local chapters to demonstrate a maximum of originality in the design and construction of monuments which will thereby embody their own ideas."

As a result, several Chapters have done exactly that and the results speak for the propriety of the policy. Large or small; stone, metal or concrete; simple or elaborate; the variations of the Pyramid, Rail Section and the Eight-Pointed Star with the letters Sigma and Tau which adorn the campuses are tributes to the imagination and ingenuity of our members. In addition to the monument type of structure there are numerous other reminders which illustrate the symbols of our fraternity.

Recently, while at National Headquarters in Tulsa, a search through back issues of *The Pyramid* revealed pictures and stories that resulted in stimulation of the thought that it might be worth while to assemble such information as was recorded so that any chapter that was interested in designing and building a campus Sigma Tau monument would have the benefit of the record of what others had done.

Some of the Chapters have in their files prints of the design details, records of costs, materials lists, etc. In some cases we have no existing record of where the monuments are, or if they still are in existence. After all, today's vigorous growth of our universities has touched off extensive building programs which frequently encroach upon all kinds of existing structures which may be relocated or destroyed. Some of the cuts we have on hand of the monuments are old and not as legible as we might wish, but all of them embody someone's ideas of "how to do it". So, for whatever it may be worth, here is a collection of prints and stories which may be useful. If nothing else, they will revive memories of past chapter projects and accomplishments.

A fitting introduction to this subject is shown by Figure 1. Man and the vicissitudes of the ages have not been kind to the Sphinx and to the pyramids of Egypt. Reputedly, armies have used them for target practice. Like Stonehenge, the Inca temples, the Maya cities, and the architectural masterpieces of the Hindus, the Arabs, the Greeks and the Romans, man's antiquities have suffered throughout the centuries all sorts of indignities at the hands of vandals, conquering armies and hordes of thoughtless tourists. They have served as stone quarries supplying the materials for the buildings of later generations. The pyramids have been stripped of their stone facings, the marble sheath, and the lead anchors have been filched from the coliseum to make everything from temples to cowsheds. In northern Britain, farm fences and outbuildings contain dressed stones with

1

latin inscriptions torn from the forts and watchtowers of Hadrian's wall, but the damaged pyramids and the desecrated Sphinx still stand, mute reminders of man's efforts to perpetuate his memories and his ideals. It was their enduring stability that influenced the founders of Sigma Tau to choose them as symbols.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate basically simple and relatively inexpensive designs but their relevance to Sigma Tau is so direct and unmistakable that "he who runs may read" and realize that our fraternity is a living entity on the campus. Monuments need not be large, elaborate nor of novel design to typify the ideals that they represent.

Figure 4 can be the inspiration for a variety of detailed designs, materials of construction, ornamentation and utility. It can be made of concrete, terra cotta, dressed stone, plain or faience tile, sheet or cast metal, common or exotic woods, glass tile with interior lighting, contrasting or harmonizing colored marble, or what have you. It can be a drinking fountain; it can bear bronze tablets memorializing people, events or historical structures; it can be glow, flood or spot-lighted in white or colored lights; it can be large or small, indoors or outdoors; a challenge to designers and an enduring monument to a Sigma Tau Chapter.

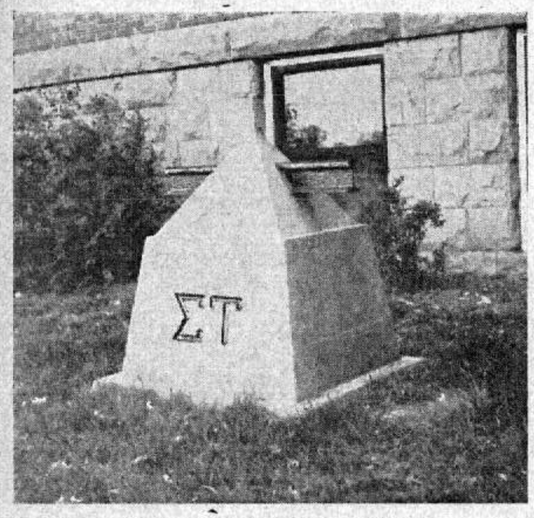
Figure 5, shown here as an indoor wood plaque with wood or metal inlaid or raised symbols, with appropriate variations could also be a metal plate mounted on a building wall or a simple stone support. It might be placed atop a pedestal taking the form of a plummet, one of the symbols which is a part of our key. Bronze, copper, brass, nickeled iron, aluminum, all of which offer opportunities for plating, brazing, chemical treatment, artificial coloring or controlled corrosion—the list of options for striking designs is almost endless.

This might be the proper juncture to voice a word of caution. Engineers tend to be rather uncomplicated thinkers in matters of appearance. Too often, because they have been trained in the use of the T-square, 30, 45, 60 and 90 degree triangles, their designs are geometrical, strictly utilitarian and starkly uninspiring.

Modern industrial design, which has come of age only within the past three or four decades, combines utility and convenience with pleasing form and attractive lines and colors. There are so many materials and methods of fabrication available today that a designer enjoys almost unlimited freedom for size, shape or construction. Witness the "space needle" restaurants at Seattle, Niagara and San Antonio; Saarinen's Jefferson Arch at St. Louis; Max Abramovitz's huge concrete domed Assembly Hall at the University of Illinois; molded automobile bodies and bathrooms fabricated of fibre glass in enormous autoclaves and finished in all the colors of the rainbow; miniaturized electronic circuits whose components are laid down in films of molecular dimensions on substrates so tiny that they must be viewed through magnifiers.

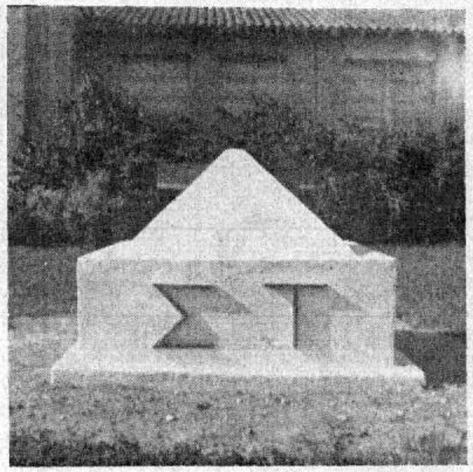
These are examples of what can be done now that minds have been freed from the restrictions and the conventions of yesterday. Why not dare

Figure 2



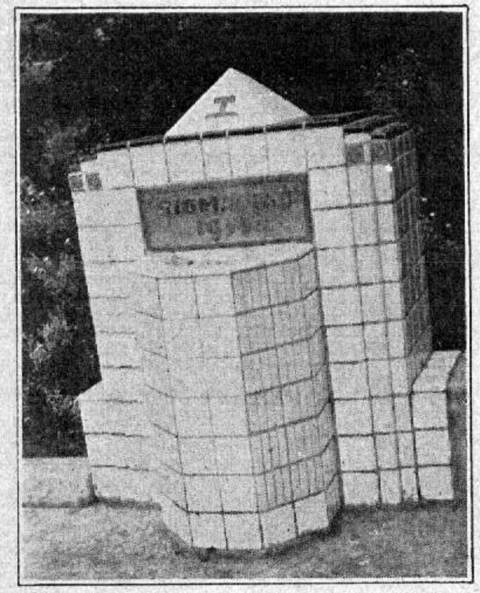
Sometimes the letters are indented.

Figure 3



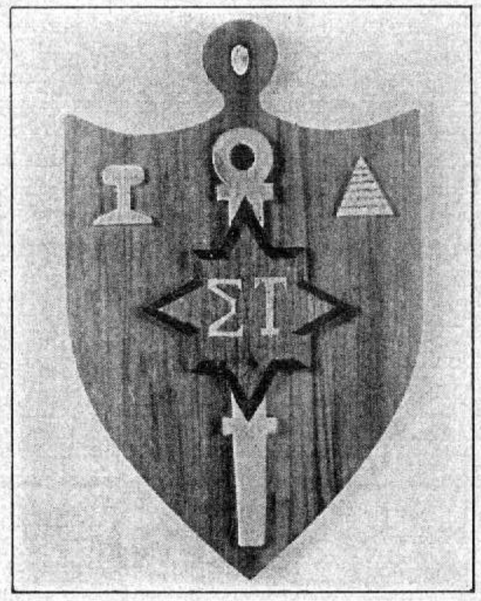
Sometimes they are embossed.

Figure 4



An inspiration for many useful and ornamental applications.

Figure 5



The materials could be almost anything.

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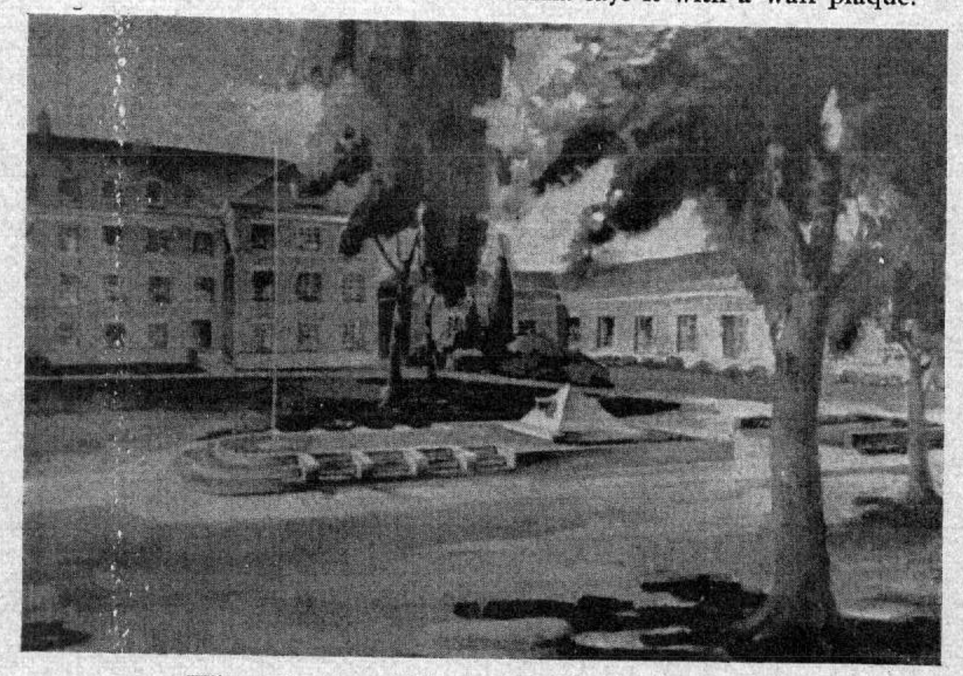
to try some new and unconventional idea for a campus monument? But here the need for the advice of qualified professionals in the arts appears.

Figure 6

Figure 7 Gamma says it with a wall plaque.



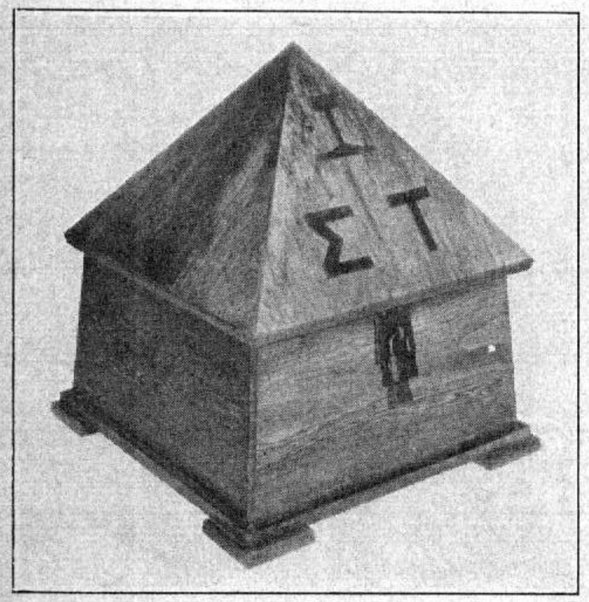
What Chapter devised this imposing design?

If the combined talents of engineers, architects, artists and landscape designers were directed to the problem some remarkable Sigma Tau monuments might result. All of these talents are available in the faculty and student bodies of our universities and they would welcome the opportunity to participate. Why not use them? One could even go down the road of the "scrap iron modern" motif without going so far as to get fouled up with the "crumpled fender" or the "jiggling cowbell" type of atrocities.

Coming back from cloud 9, Gamma Chapter's decorative tablet is shown by Figure 6. The picture shows that it is used to list the Engineer's Day awards, but there are an almost infinite number of useful applications. It does not exclude the use of other monuments or memorials on the same campus. Size, style, materials and location are completely flexible.

Figure 7 is a rendering of a proposed design, but unfortunately no particulars concerning it are available. However, the picture speaks for itself. Admittedly a somewhat ambitious project, in the proper setting it could be outstanding, and the combination of features is quite thought-provoking.

Figure 8



What is it?

Figure 9

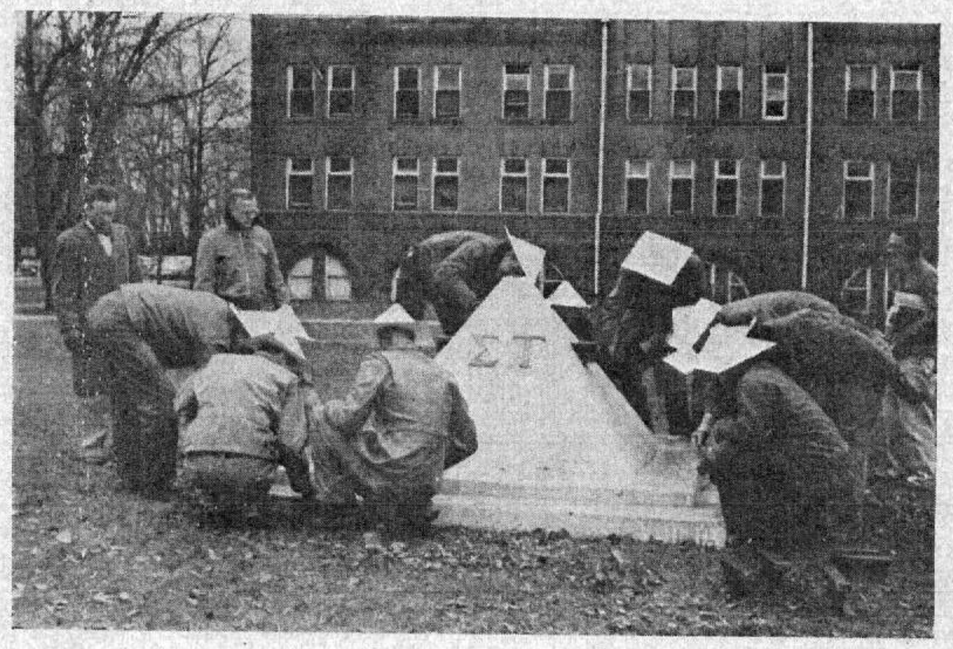
Wyoming has a metal pyramid on a massive stone base.

Figure 8, while not a monument, illustrates an idea which could have many useful applications beyond storing Sigma Tau material. It could be a ballot box, a mystery chest to be opened on some significant occasion, it might even be used as a "What is it?" to excite curiosities never to be satisfied.

Omega Chapter's design shown in Figure 9 consists of a metal pyramid and rail section mounted on a rough stone pedestal, a simple but effective design.

Pi Chapter has built a rather large pyramid which with its Sigma Tau letters and rail section offers pledges an annual cleaning and refurbishing

Figure 10

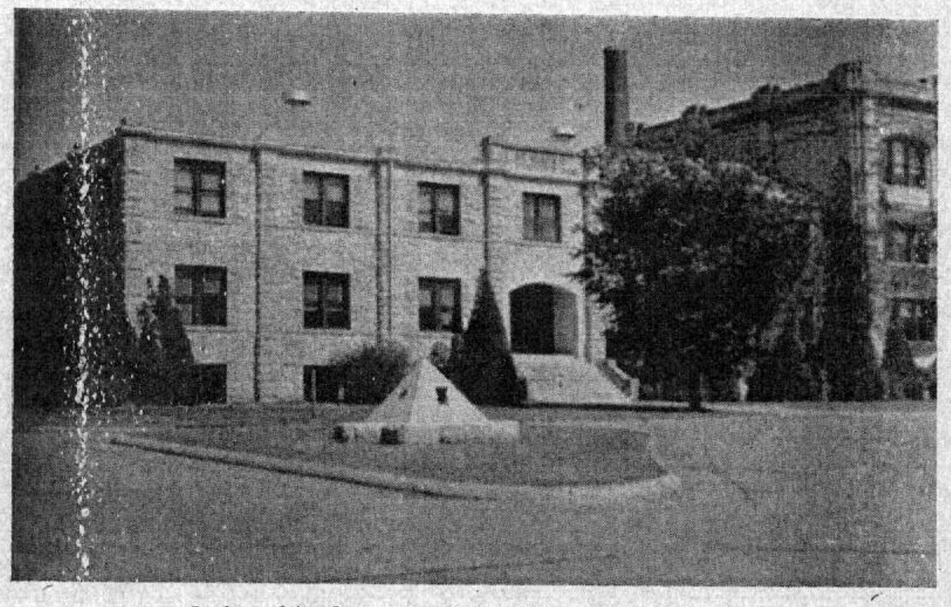


Every year the pledges celebrate "clean up week".

chore as well as being a solid reminder that "Sigma Tau is here" (Figure 10). In 1958, Pi initiated Heide Vandersluis as its first girl member. As a pledge she was excused from carrying a heavy rail section to classes, but she did not escape duty on the monument cleaning detail, and armed with a scrub brush she labored with the men.

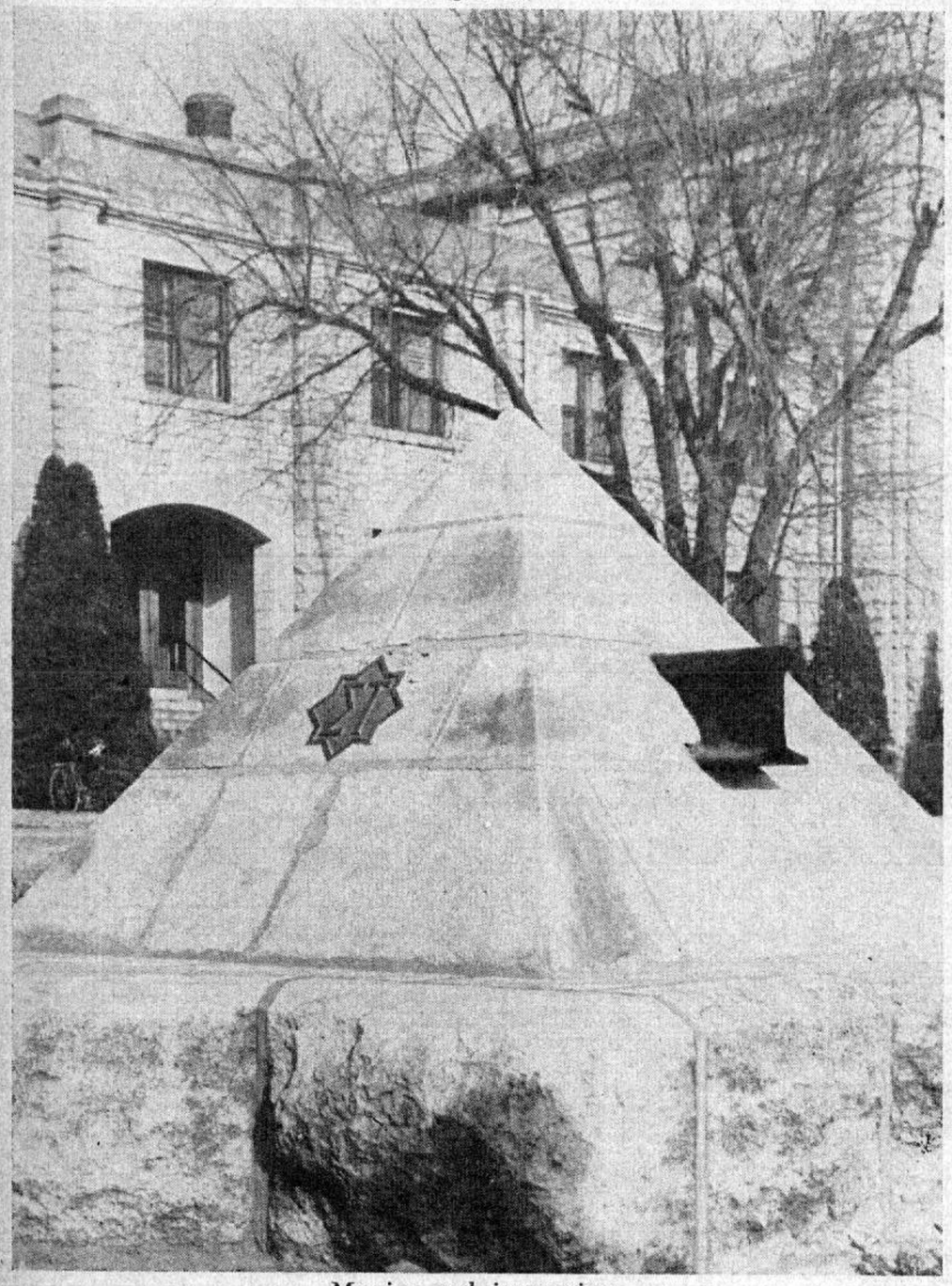
At Epsilon Chapter they selected a site for their monument on an island

Figure 11



Only a blind man could fail to notice this one.

Figure 12

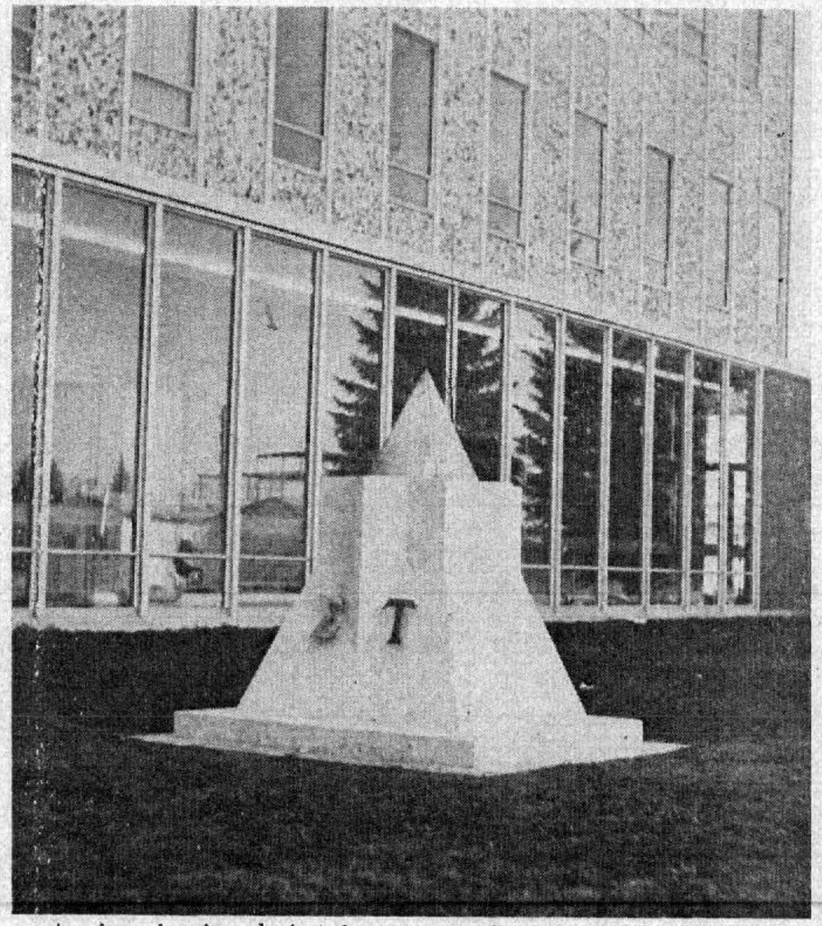


Massive and impressive.

in the middle of a pavement turnaround. It is large, built for permanence and located in a conspicuous spot. The above-ground base is a rough stone eight-pointed star which is surmounted by a cut stone-faced pyramid pierced by a full-sized rail section. The other two sides bear the Greek letters Sigma and Tau on cast plates. Figure 11 shows the location on the island in the

4

Figure 13



An imaginative design in an attention arresting location.

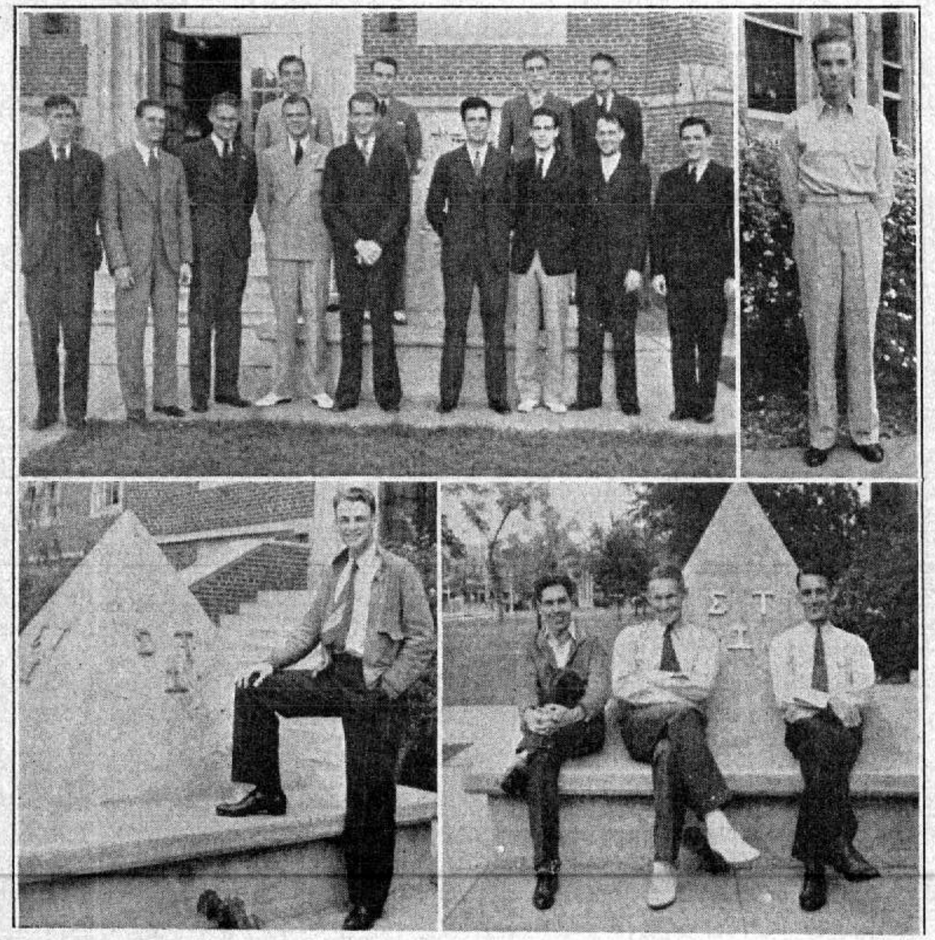
turnaround. Figure 12 is a closeup which brings out the details of construction more clearly.

Richard E. Carlson, Alpha Delta '61, designed the monument at Utah State University (Figure 13) which was financed by alumni donations and built by the active chapter members. It is constructed of reinforced concrete and takes the form of a pyramid thrust through an eight-pointed star column, and capped with a brass top. The Greek letters Sigma and Tau are mounted on the east and west sides and the monument is located on the lawn between the two sections of the Engineering Building. Maintainence by successive pledge classes keeps it attractive and in good repair.

Mu Chapter has decorated the Oklahoma University campus by adding a large pyramid (Figure 14) surmounting a sturdy base, which is high and wide enough to serve as a bench, and as the illustration shows, seems to serve that purpose very well. The design is clean and simple, bearing the letters Sigma and Tau with an accompanying rail section on each of the four sides.

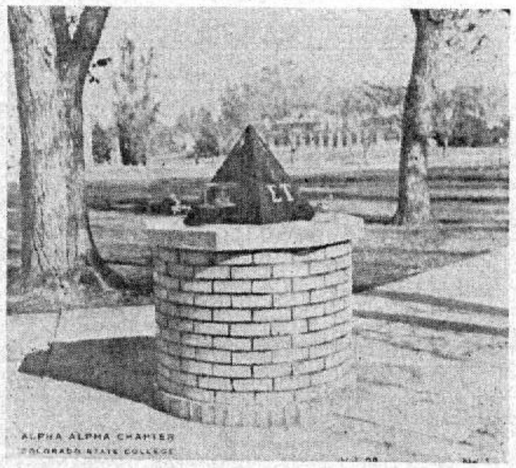
On the campus at Fort Collins, Colorado, Alpha Alpha Chapter's monu-

Figure 14



Mu combines utility with symbolism.

Figure 15



At Fort Collins there is a clean, well-placed design.

5